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THE WORK OF THE JEANES AND SLATER FUNDS

BY B. C. CALDWELL,

The John F. Slater Fund, New York.

These organizations have the same purpose, the training of Negro youth in the Southern States; they have the same director, the president of the Jeanes Fund being also director of the Slater fund; and they have the same offices in New Orleans and New York. They have separate though overlapping boards of trustees.

The Jeanes work is confined to rural schools, and is almost entirely industrial. Most of the Slater revenue is spent for secondary and higher education, mainly academic, partly vocational and industrial.

The Jeanes work, now in its fifth year, entered a new field. From the start it aimed to reach the school in the background—the remote country school for Negro children, out of sight in the backwoods, down the bayou, on the sea marsh, up in the piney woods, or out in the gullied wilderness of abandoned plantations. Nearly all these schools are held in shabby buildings, mostly old churches, some in cabins and country stores, a few in deserted dwellings. I have seen one in Alabama held in a saw-mill shed, one in Mississippi in a barn, one in Georgia in a peach-packing shed, one in Arkansas in a dry-kiln, one in Louisiana in a stranded flatboat, and one in Texas in a sheepfold. For the most part these schools are taught by untrained teachers without any sort of supervision. The equipment is generally meagre, the pay small and the term short. The Jeanes Fund undertook to send trained industrial teachers into this field to help the people to improve the physical conditions and the teachers to better the instruction given the children.

The teachers employed in this work are trained in some kind of industrial work, domestic or vocational. Most of them teach sewing. Next in number are those who teach cooking. Some are graduate nurses, some laundresses, some basket-makers, some farmers and dairymen; and truck-gardening, blacksmithing, carpentry, mattress-making, baking, and shoemaking are among the industries taught by these teachers.

For the current year there are 120 Jeanes teachers at work, in 120 counties of 11 Southern States, Maryland to Texas. Each teacher visits a number of the country schools, gives a lesson in some industry, plans with the regular teacher to give succeeding lessons in her absence, organizes parents' clubs and starts a movement for better school equipment or longer term, counsels the local teacher about her daily teaching, and stirs the community to united effort to better the school. Although paid by the Jeanes Fund, all these teachers are selected by the county superintendent, do their work under his direction and are members of his teaching corps just like the other teachers of the county.

In many counties this spring the industrial teacher gathered specimens of sewing, baking, pastry, basketry, chair-caning, mattresses, shuck mats, garden truck, carpentry and furniture from all the schools of the county and put them on exhibition at the courthouse, at the superintendent's office or other central point. These exhibits were visited by numbers of school patrons, teachers, children and the white school officials and citizens. In some cases prizes were offered by banks, merchants, railroads and planters for the best work in the various crafts.

The industrial teachers are graduates of Hampton, Pratt Institute, Tuskegee, Petersburg, Cheney, Fisk, Atlanta and kindred institutions. All of them are Negroes. Their salaries range from \$40 to \$75 a month, and their terms from six to twelve months a year.

At the outset the entire expense of this industrial work was borne by the Jeanes Fund. After a year or two the county school boards began contributing, sometimes paying the traveling expenses of the industrial teacher, sometimes buying sewing machines, cook stoves and washtubs for the schools, sometimes renting plots of ground for farm and garden work. Last year one or two counties took over the entire expense of the work, and fifteen or twenty undertook to pay half or part of the teacher's salary.

The Slater Fund from the beginning has devoted most of its means to the higher education of Negro youth, mainly with the purpose of training teachers for the primary schools. But almost from the start it has contributed to public school work in town and city with the same general end in view, devoting its entire contribution to these public schools to the establishment and maintenance of industrial and vocational training. At this time more than three-

fourths of the Slater money is still applied to higher school work, mainly urban and academic. But for the past year or two the Slater trust has been experimenting with some new and promising work in the country.

Several years ago a parish superintendent in Louisiana applied to the Slater Fund for assistance in establishing a country high school for Negro children. Almost at the same time a county superintendent in Virginia, another in Arkansas, and one in Mississippi proposed substantially the same thing. In each case the main purpose was to train teachers for the country schools of the county. Trained teachers cannot be had for the pitiful salary paid to country Negro teachers. And each of these superintendents hoped to get a regular and fairly good supply of teachers definitely trained to do the work needed in his county.

The parish of Tangipahoa, La., was the first to undertake the establishment of such a school. Superintendent Lewis named it the Parish Training School for Colored Children, and located it at Kentwood, a village in the piney woods part of the parish. The parish school board supplied the teachers and equipment, the Brooks-Scanlon Lumber Company furnished material for the house and ten acres of land, and the Slater Fund gives \$500 a year for industrial teaching. The school is now in its second year and promises to render valuable service to the parish.

Three similar schools have been established since; one in Newton County, Miss., to which the county, the town of Newton and an organization of colored people contributed; another in Hempstead County, Ark., where a town school supported by state and local funds was converted into a central training school (not county, because there is no county school body in Arkansas), and the funds were raised by the town of Hope, the local cotton men, and the white and colored citizens individually; and a third in Sabine Parish, Louisiana, where a large community school, seven miles in the country, was made the parish training school, supported by the Sabine school board, with contributions of the timber syndicates owning most of the land around the school. In each of these cases the Slater Fund contributes \$500 a year for three years, the contributions to be continued if the results justify the expenditure. There are no precedents to follow in this kind of work. Each of the counties is working out its problem in the way that seems best to

the superintendent and school board. They vary greatly in local conditions, and each will have to feel its way toward the end in view. But all of them are making the training school distinctly agricultural and industrial all the way through the course offered, and some of them are already giving class work and handcraft of real worth.

Every county in the South has felt the need of fairly well trained teachers for its Negro country schools. But so far as I know this is the first time that superintendents have actually gone to work to get such teachers by training them at home. It will take several years to work out the plan; and local school authorities will give their individual stamp to it in each county. But thus far it looks promising; and the end in view goes to the very heart of the whole matter of Negro education.

I need not speak of the well known schools, Hampton, Tuskegee, Atlanta, Fisk, Spellman and the rest, to which the greater part of the Slater income is devoted. But in two of these and in several colored state normal schools the Slater Fund contributes to the maintenance of summer normal schools for teachers, offering good academic and industrial training for country teachers.

Both the Jeanes Fund and the Slater Fund do a little in the way of helping to build school houses. In several counties of Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama the Jeanes Fund is assisting in the building of one good Negro school house as a sample. In each case the community raises a fund for the house, the county school board gives an equal or larger sum, and the Jeanes Fund gives about one-third of the cost of the house. The Slater Fund contributes to the same kind of work in a limited way, and gives more largely to the equipment of town and city schools for vocational work. The magnificent new building for Negro children above the fifth grade erected by the city of Charleston was furnished with superior equipment for all kinds of hand and power work by the Slater Fund.